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SHADOWS
OF THE PAST!



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"Call me Shang-Chi, as my father did, when he raised me in the vacuum of his Honan, China retreat. I learned many things from my father: that my name means 'The Rising and Advancing of a Spirit,' and that my body could be forged into a living weapon through the discipline of kung fu. Since then, I have learned that my father is Dr. Fu Manchu, the most insidiously evil man on Earth... and that to ~~honor~~ him would bring nothing but disaster to the spirit of my name."

Stan Lee
PRESENTS:

MASTER OF KUNG FU!

Featuring supporting characters created by SAX ROHMER

SHADOWS OF A SILENT PAST

"MONTHS AGO, THE THREAT POSED BY MY FATHER FU MANCHU WAS APPARENTLY ENDED..."

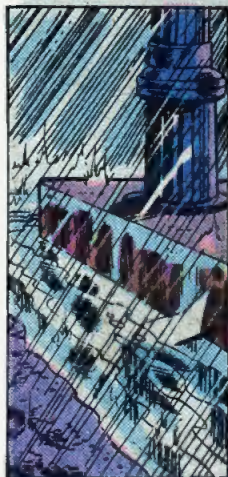


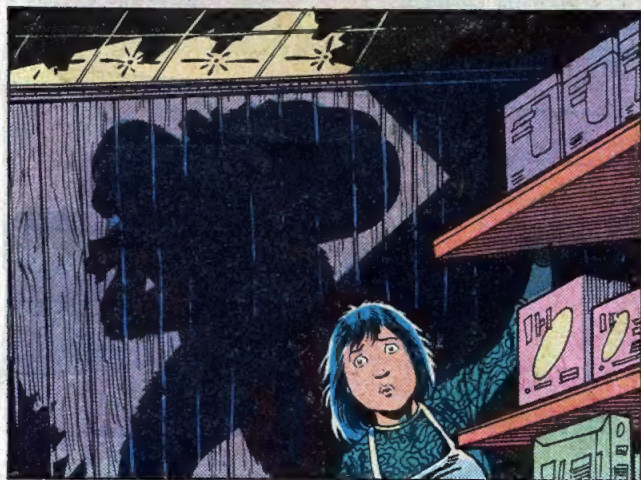
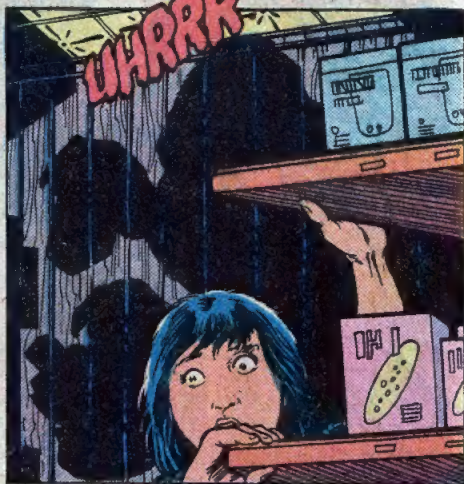
"...BUT STILL I AM HAUNTED BY SHADOWS FROM THE PAST...AND PERHAPS SHADES OF THE FUTURE."

"INDEED, I AM POSSESSED BY THE FEELING THAT SOMETHING MAY HAPPEN SOON... **MUST** HAPPEN SOON. IT IS INEVITABLE, AND THE CERTAINTY MAKES MY FLESH CRAWL."

DOUG MOENCH WRITER / MIKE ZECK ARTIST / GENE DAY INKER / JIM NOVAK LETTERER / BOB SHAREN COLORIST / JIM SALICRUP EDITOR / JIM SHOOTER EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

MASTER OF KUNG FU: Vol. 1, No. 82, September, 1980 issue. (U.S.P.S. 427-030) Published by MARVEL COMICS GROUP, James E. Galton, President, Stan Lee, Publisher, Milton Schiffman, Vice-President, Production. OFFICE OF PUBLICATION: 575 MADISON AVENUE, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10022. SECOND CLASS POSTAGE PAID AT NEW YORK, N.Y. AND AT ADDITIONAL MAILING OFFICES. Published monthly. Copyright © 1980 by Marvel Comics Group, a division of Cadence Industries Corporation. All rights reserved. Price \$0.65 per copy in the U.S. and Canada. Subscription rate \$6.00 for 12 issues. Canada, \$7.00. Foreign, \$8.00. Printed in the U.S.A. No similarity between any of the names, characters, persons, and/or institutions in this magazine with those of any living or dead person or institution is intended, and any such similarity which may exist is purely coincidental. This periodical may not be sold except by authorized dealers and is sold subject to the conditions that it shall not be sold or distributed with any part of its cover or markings removed, nor in a mutilated condition. SHANG-CHI (including all prominent characters featured in the issue), and the distinctive likenesses thereof, are trademarks of the MARVEL COMICS GROUP.







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a long, long, loooong time.



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"AFTER THE LONG NIGHT OF HARD RAIN, THE CITY IS CLEANER, BRIGHTER THAN I HAVE EVER BEFORE SEEN..."

SO, SHANG-CHI, THANKS TO YOU, IT APPEARS THE GANG VIOLENCE IN CHINATOWN HAS ABATED.

YOU ARE FULLY AS EXTRAORDINARY AS MY SISTER LEIKO CLAIMED.

HONG KONG
EMBASSY

"LEIKO'S BROTHER DAVID SEEMS WEARY, STRAINED BY HIS OWN DEMANDS UPON HIMSELF, BUT GENUINELY PLEASED..."

ANYWAY, I'VE BEEN SO BUSY WITH MY TASKS HERE AT THE EMBASSY THAT I HAVEN'T HAD A CHANCE TO SPEAK WITH YOU IN DAYS. WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN DOING?

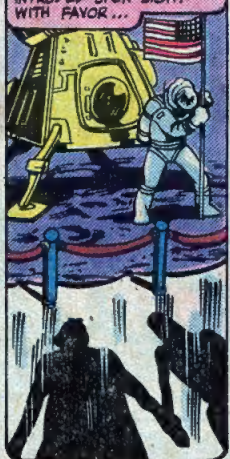
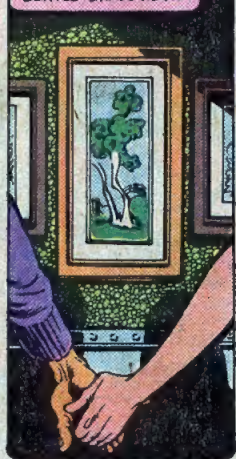
LEIKO HAS BEEN ACQUAINTING ME WITH THE MORE PLEASANT SIDES OF NEW YORK, DAVID...

"AND I TELL HIM OF SOFTER NIGHTS..."

"... FILLED WITH MORE GENTLE SHADOWS..."

"... TIMES WHEN DARKNESS INTRUDED UPON LIGHT WITH FAVOR..."

"... AND THE CONTRASTING HARMONIES OF LOVE..."



"AND IT CAUSES ME TO THINK PERHAPS LAST NIGHT'S FREEMONTION WAS WRONG, MERELY THE LURKING SHADOWS OF A GUILT BORN OF TOO MUCH HAPPINESS..."

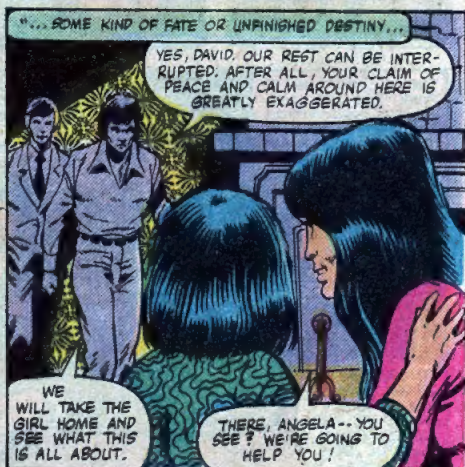
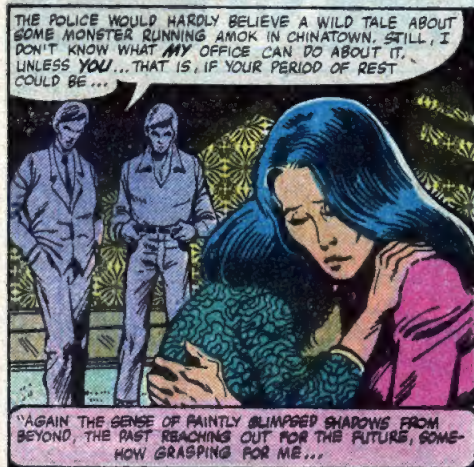
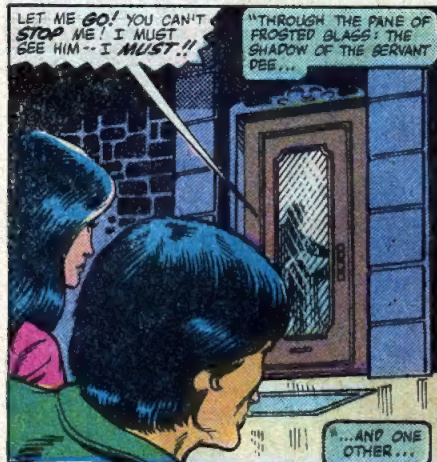
AH, THEN YOU'VE FINALLY BEEN GETTING YOUR MUCH-NEEDED NEW YORK REST; DOES THE WORLD NOW LOOK A BIT BETTER TO YOU?

A BIT, YES, QUITE A BIT.

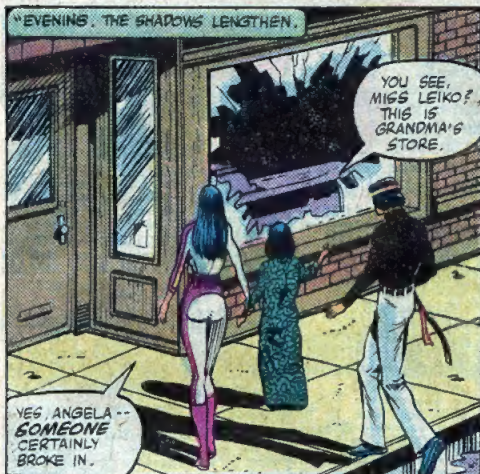
BUT WE'D STILL LIKE TO STAY HERE AT THE EMBASSY A WHILE LONGER, DAVID-- BEFORE WE RETURN TO ENGLAND.

OF COURSE, SISTER, EVENTS AROUND HERE SHOULD BE MUCH CALMER, MORE PEACEFUL, NOW THAT I'VE --

NO!!



"EVENINGS. THE SHADOWS LENGTHEN."



YES, ANGELA --
SOMEONE
CERTAINLY
BROKE IN.

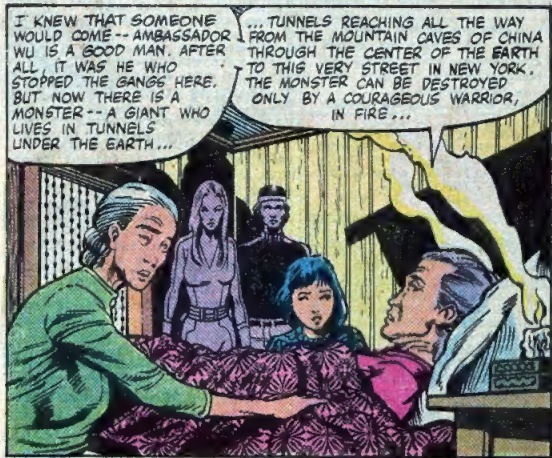
COME ON -- GRANDMA'S BACK HERE, SHE'LL
TELL YOU -- AND YOU CAN BELIEVE **HER**.
SHE ALWAYS SAYS IT'S BAD TO TELL LIES.



"OBVIOUS SIGNS OF A
STRUGGLE -- OR A
SENSELESS RAMPAGE..."

I KNEW THAT SOMEONE
WOULD COME -- AMBASSADOR
WU IS A GOOD MAN. AFTER
ALL, IT WAS HE WHO
STOPPED THE GANGS HERE.
BUT NOW THERE IS A
MONSTER -- A GIANT WHO
LIVES IN TUNNELS
UNDER THE EARTH...

... TUNNELS REACHING ALL THE WAY
FROM THE MOUNTAIN CAVES OF CHINA
THROUGH THE CENTER OF THE EARTH
TO THIS VERY STREET IN NEW YORK.
THE MONSTER CAN BE DESTROYED
ONLY BY A COURAGEOUS WARRIOR,
IN FIRE...



THE MONSTER MUST BE STOPPED, NOT JUST
FOR ME AND MY GRANDDAUGHTER, BUT FOR THE
OTHERS TOO -- THE MANY OTHERS WHO HAVE
ALSO SUFFERED FROM THE MONSTER...



WE... WE'LL
SEE WHAT
WE CAN DO.

"WITH FEVER, SHE IS... MAD."

ANGELA, MY BROTHER SAID OTHERS HAVE
SEEN THIS SAME MONSTER -- AND NOW
YOUR GRANDMOTHER SAYS THE SAME
THING. DO YOU KNOW WHO THESE
OTHERS ARE?



YES, MISS
LEIKO.



THEM.

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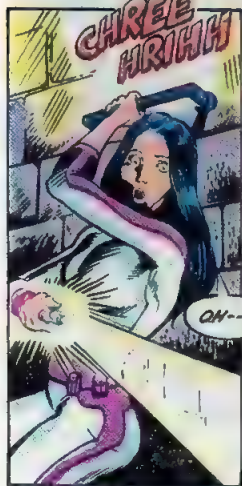
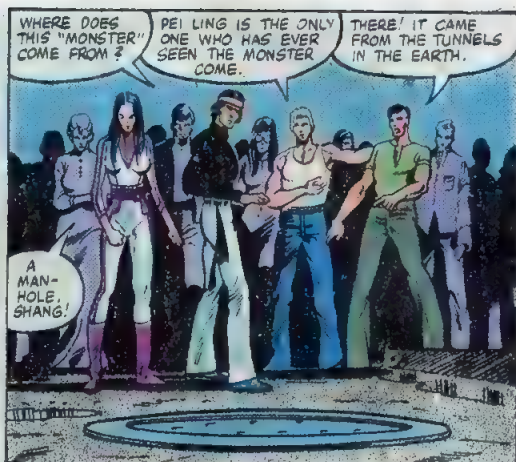
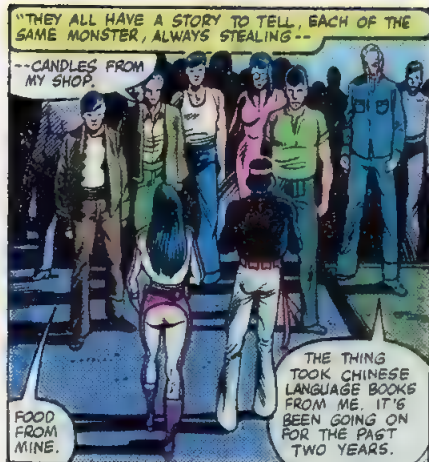
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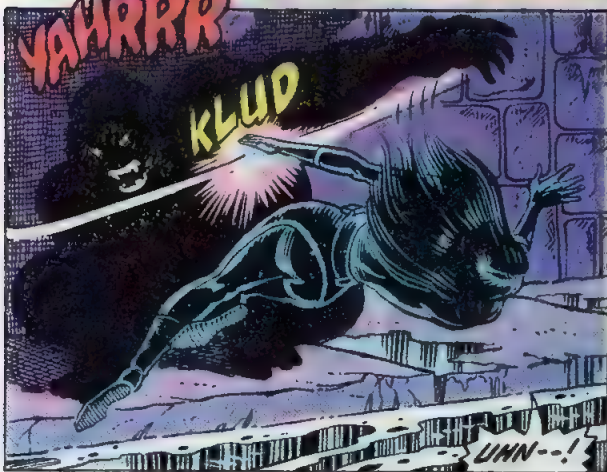


I MEAN NO DISRESPECT, BUT YOU MUST TRY TO UNDERSTAND: LEGENDS WERE WOVEN ONLY TO GIVE FLESH TO ELUSIVE TRUTHS. THEY ARE NOT MEANT TO BE STUDIED AS ACCOUNTS OF REALITY.

THERE MUST BE A RATIONAL EXPLANATION FOR THIS SO-CALLED MONG--

NO EXPLANATION IS NEEDED. WE HAVE *SEEN* THE MONSTER--ONLY IN DARKNESS, TRUE, BUT WE *HAVE* SEEN IT.

NOTHING THERE--JUST RIPPLES. THE SPLASH MUST HAVE BEEN CAUSED BY A RAT DIVING INTO THE WATER OR--



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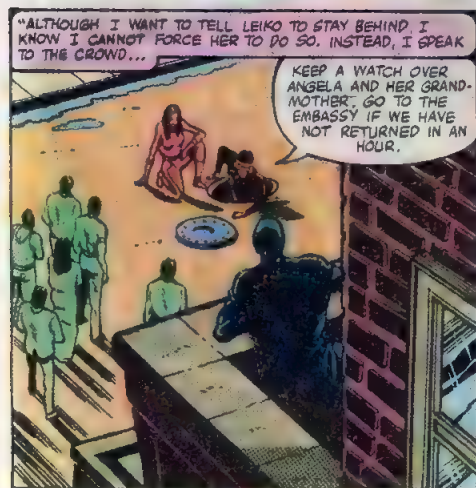
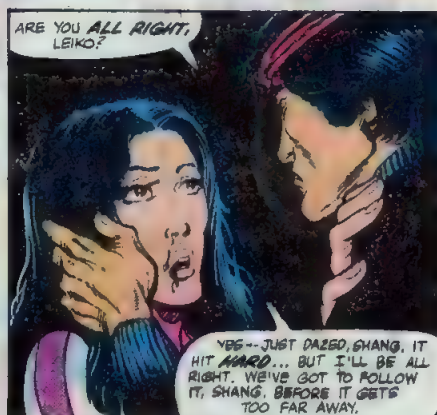
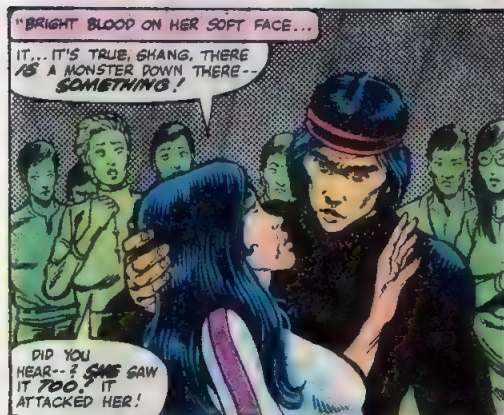
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6-FOOT
LENGTH

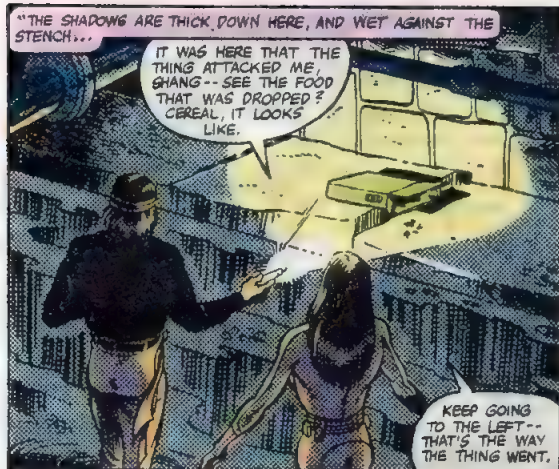


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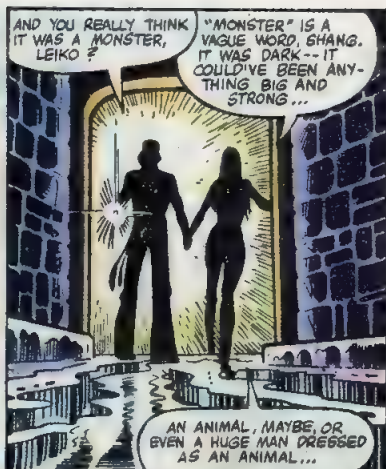




"THE SHADOWS ARE THICK DOWN HERE, AND WET AGAINST THE STENCH..."

IT WAS HERE THAT THE THING ATTACKED ME, GHANG-- SEE THE FOOD THAT WAS DROPPED? CEREAL, IT LOOKS LIKE.

KEEP GOING TO THE LEFT-- THAT'S THE WAY THE THING WENT.



AND YOU REALLY THINK IT WAS A MONSTER, LEIKO?

"MONSTER" IS A VAGUE WORD, GHANG. IT WAS DARK-- IT COULD'VE BEEN ANYTHING BIG AND STRONG...

AN ANIMAL, MAYBE, OR EVEN A HUGE MAN DRESSED AS AN ANIMAL...



WHERE NOW? WHICH TURN?

I... I DON'T KNOW. I DIDN'T FOLLOW...



WAIT, LEIKO -- SOME KIND OF... GRIT SIFTING DOWN...

CRACKS OF DIM LIGHT...



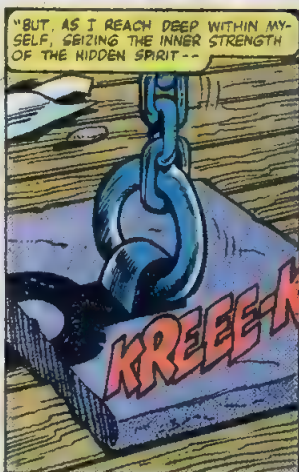
IT'S A LARGE LOOSE STONE...

SOME KIND OF PORTAL?



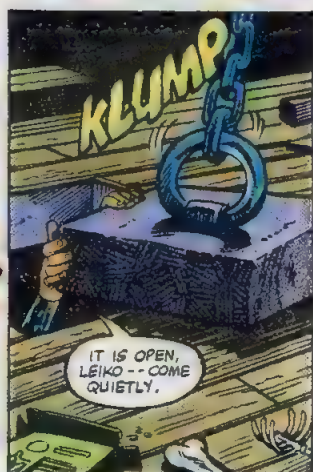
NGGH! IF IT IS THEN THE ONE WHO USES IT IS A MONSTER INDEED.

IT MAY BE BEYOND MY STRENGTH TO LIFT...



"BUT, AS I REACH DEEP WITHIN MYSELF, SEIZING THE INNER STRENGTH OF THE HIDDEN SPIRIT --"

KREEE-K



IT IS OPEN, LEIKO -- COME QUIETLY.

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"A RICKETY STAIRWAY IS CENTRAL TO THE STRUCTURED CHAOS OF DESIGN. ONLY THE CHAIN AND PULLEY ARE NEW..."

DO YOU THINK THE THING IS HERE, SHANG?

SOMEONE DWELLS HERE, LEIKO-- THERE ARE THE FRESH REMAINS OF FOOD SCATTERED ON THE FLOOR... BUT NOWHERE TO HIDE...

EXCEPT IN THE TOP FLOOR, SHANG-- PART OF IT'S ENCLOSED, AND THE STAIRWAY LEADS TO AN OPENING IN ITS FLOOR.

THEN WE MUST MOUNT THE STAIRWAY.

"I PREPARE MYSELF--AS THE PREMONITION GROWS STRONGER AGAIN STIRRING MY FLESH."

"IT HAPPENS NEAR THE TOP. A DARK SHAPE RIPS ITSELF FROM THE DEEPER DARKNESS--"

REHRR

"... BUT HALTS, AS IF MERELY GUARDING THE ENTRANCE."

TRAPPED!

YOU'RE TRAPPED, SHANG-CHI-- AT LAST! TRAPPED, SON OF FU MANCHU! BETWEEN ME AND MY FRIEND--MY ALLY, MY SERVANT!

WHO ARE YOU, SI-FAN?

I AM A DWELLER IN DARKNESS--!

SENT BY CELESTIAL FU MANCHU TO SLAY YOU, I AM NOW THE LAST ONE LEFT! THE OTHERS WENT OUT TO FIND YOU AND NEVER RETURNED, WE WERE SOON TO MOVE ON TO LONDON, BUT I REMAINED, PLEDGED TO CARRY OUT MY MISSION!



I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU... WAITING FOR THIS MOMENT WHICH HAS NOW ARRIVED. AND NOW-- AT LAST!-- I SHALL FULFILL GLORIOUS FU MANCHU'S COMMAND!

LEIKO, WATCH THE MONSTER ABOVE.

THAT WAS YEARS AGO, SI-FAN! FU MANCHU IS NO LONGER BASED IN NEW YORK -- NOR HAVE I BEEN HERE IN YEARS!



FU MANCHU IS GONE -- PERHAPS EVEN DEAD!

FU MANCHU WILL NEVER DIE!!

PERHAPS NOT, BUT HIS WAR IS ENDED! HIS COMMANDS TO YOU BELONG IN THE DEAD PAST!



NO! I AM CUNNING -- TOO CUNNING TO BE DECEIVED!

THIS IS NOW -- IT IS THE PRESENT! I KNOW IT IS! AND MY TRAP HAS LONG BEEN PREPARED! WHEN THE OTHERS FAILED TO RETURN, I WENT OUT TO SEEK A NEW ALLY --



IT'S NOT MOVING, SHANG... YET.

-- BUT THE PEOPLE HERE CANNOT BE TRUSTED, SO I FREED MY FRIEND, MADE HIM TRUST ME BY FEEDING HIM. THEN I TRAINED HIM, AND NOW HE FEEDS ME -- BRINGS ME EVERYTHING I NEED! NOW HE WILL BRING ME YOUR HEAD, SON OF FU MANCHU!



SHANG, IT... IT MIGHT LUNGE AT ANY MOMENT -- BETTER TO TAKE OUR CHANCES WITH THE MADMAN BELOW.



YEE.



NO!!

CHOK



BADUM

MY TRAP IS PERFECT! I WON'T LET YOU ESCAPE IT!!

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SHANG-- THE FIRE'S RISING!

WE HAVE NO CHOICE NOW, LEIKO! WE MUST GO UP...

"...TO GREET A MONSTER WHO WOULD BLOCK OUR PATH, AND TURN US AWAY INTO DEATH."

WUMP

"INSTEAD THE MONSTER FALLS."

"ABOVE, FLICKERING CANDLES DIMLY LIGHT THE LAIR OF A MONSTER AND HIS 'FRIEND'..."

HE... HE HAS LIVED HERE FOR YEARS -- ALONE WITH HIS MAD COMMAND, HIS PEMENTED DREAM.

IT... IT'S LIKE THE CRAZED WORLD WAR II JAPANESE SOLDIERS, SHANG -- HIDING OUT IN THE PHILIPPINE JUNGLES UNTIL THE EARLY SEVENTIES, UNAWARE THAT THE WAR HAD LONG SINCE ENDED THE SI-FAN AND HIS PET HAVE BEEN AWAITING THIS FINAL BATTLE!

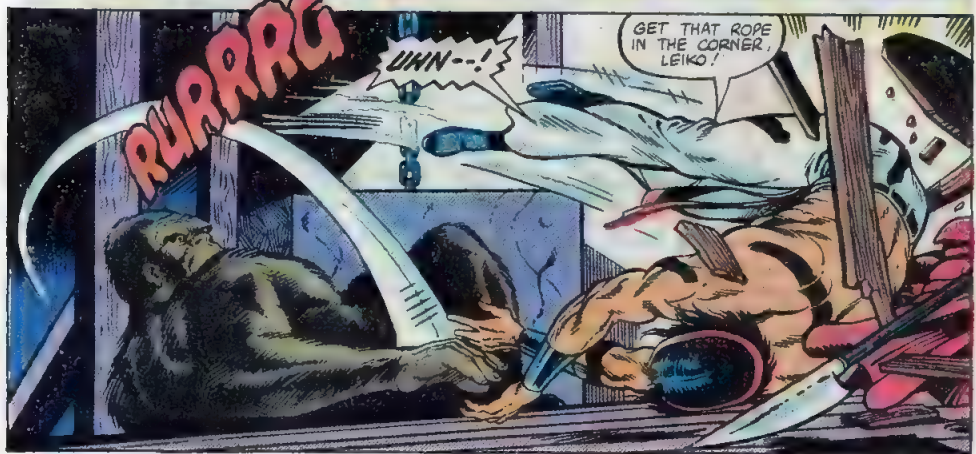
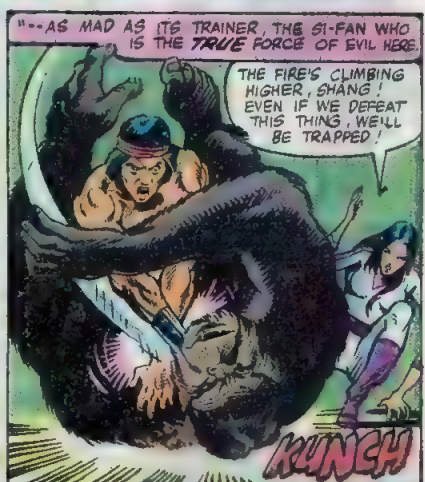
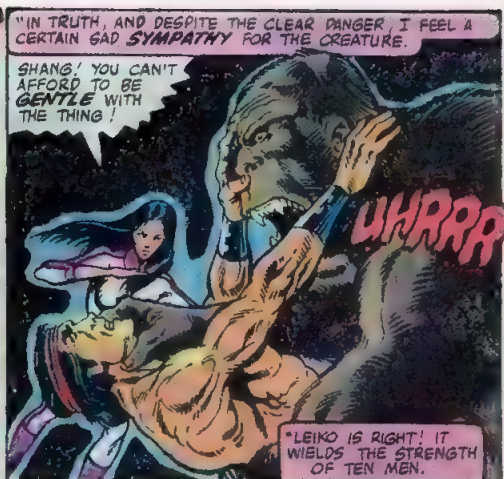
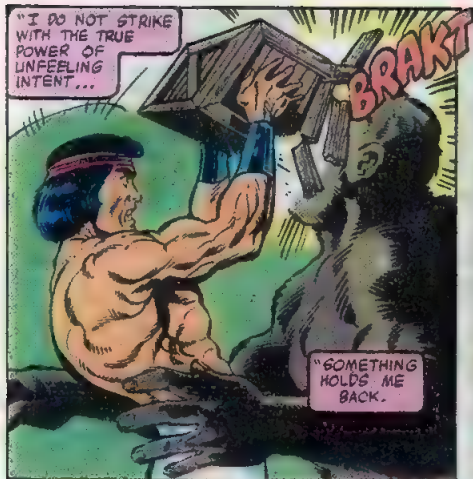
BUT WE'VE GOT TO FIND SOME OTHER WAY OUT OF HERE, SHANG IF THERE IS ONE!

RAHRR

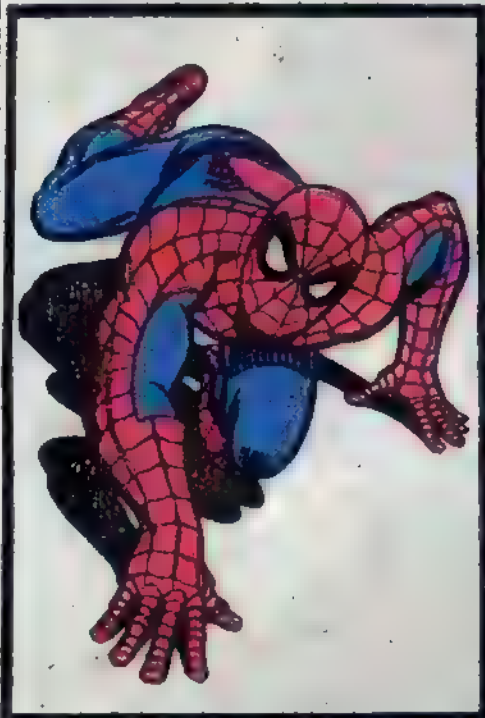
"BEHIND US--"

"...THE MONSTER SOMEHOW STOPPED ITS FALL BEFORE REACHING THE BOTTOM..."

"...AND NOW, HAS CLIMBED QUICKLY."



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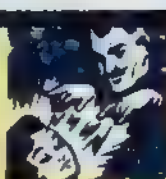
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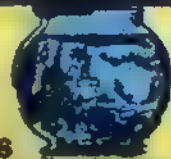
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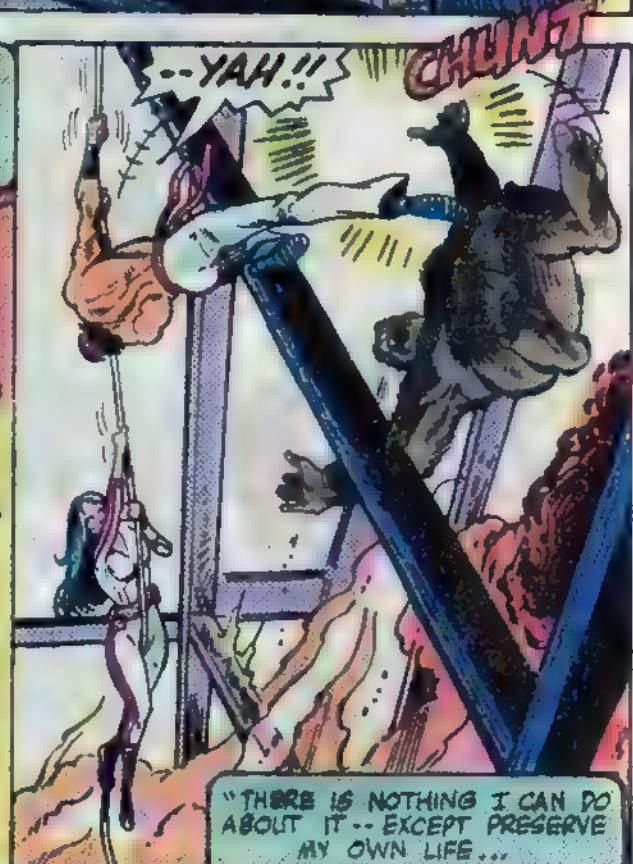
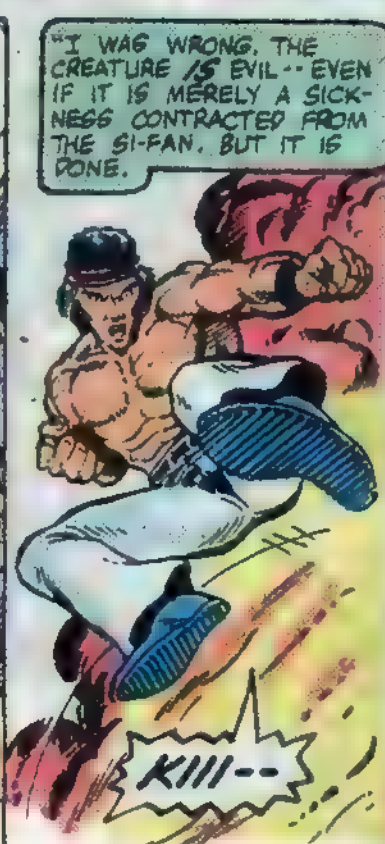
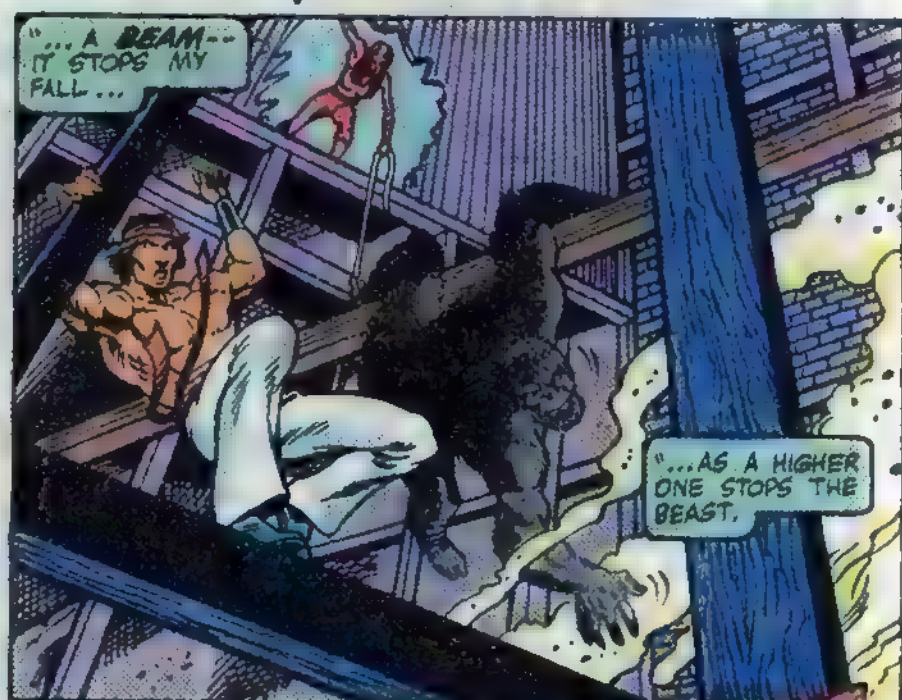
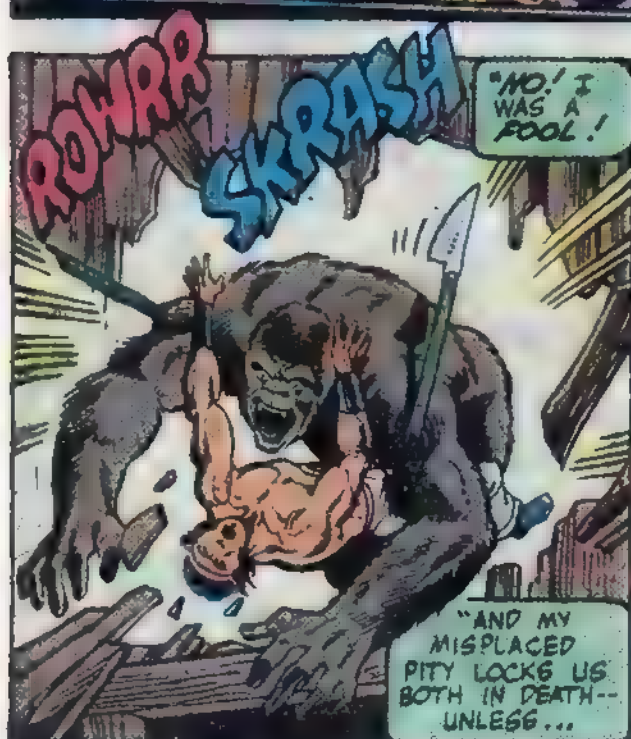
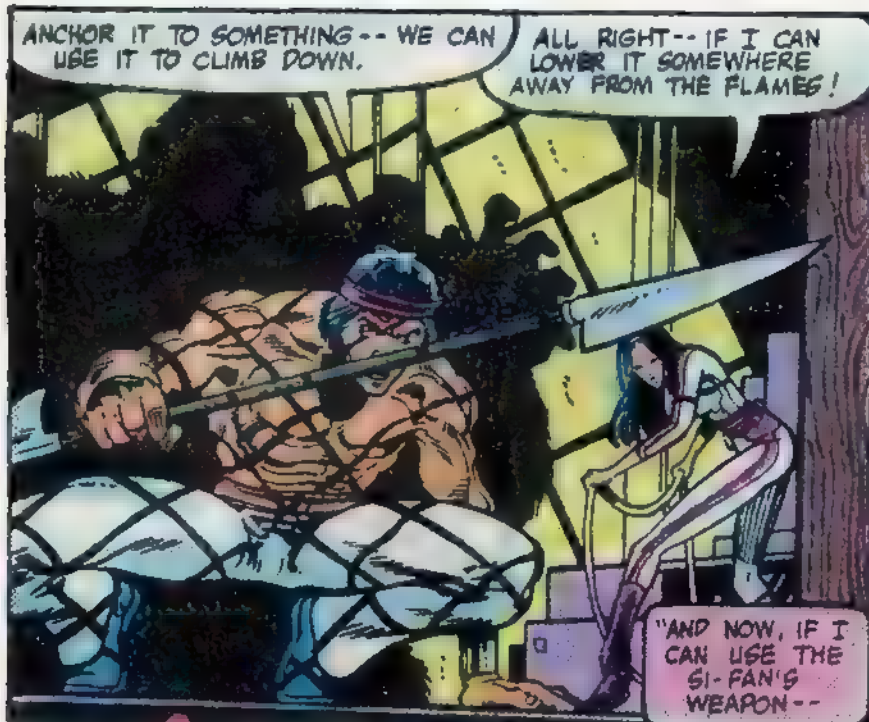
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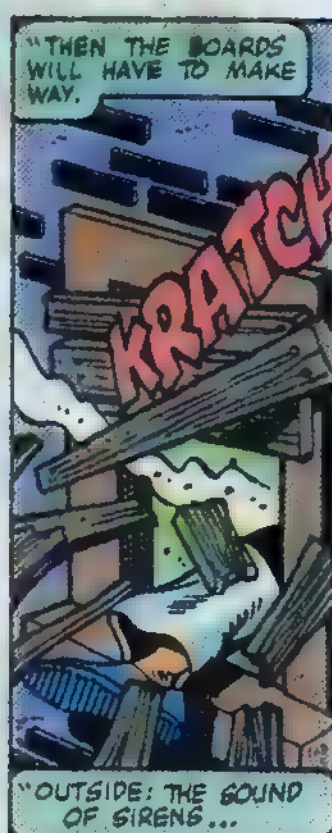
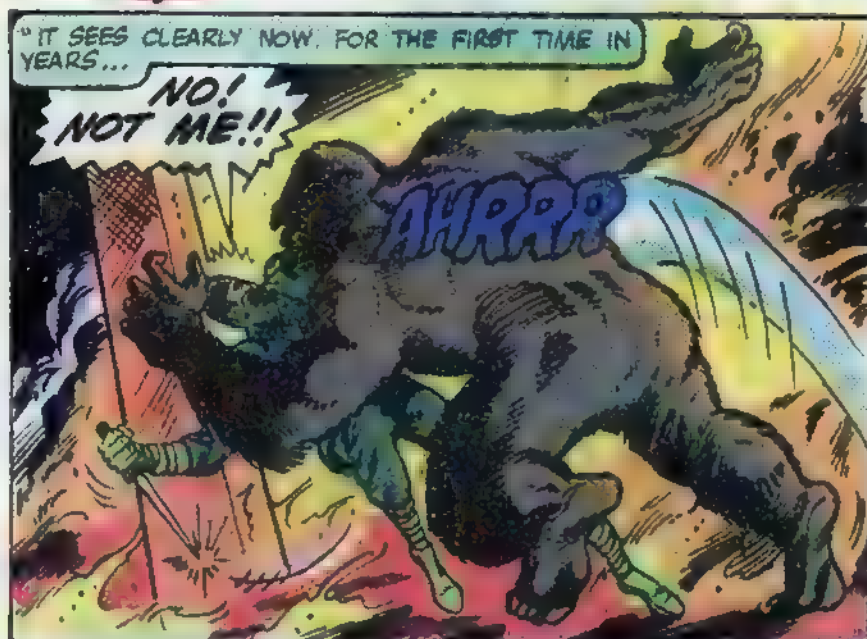
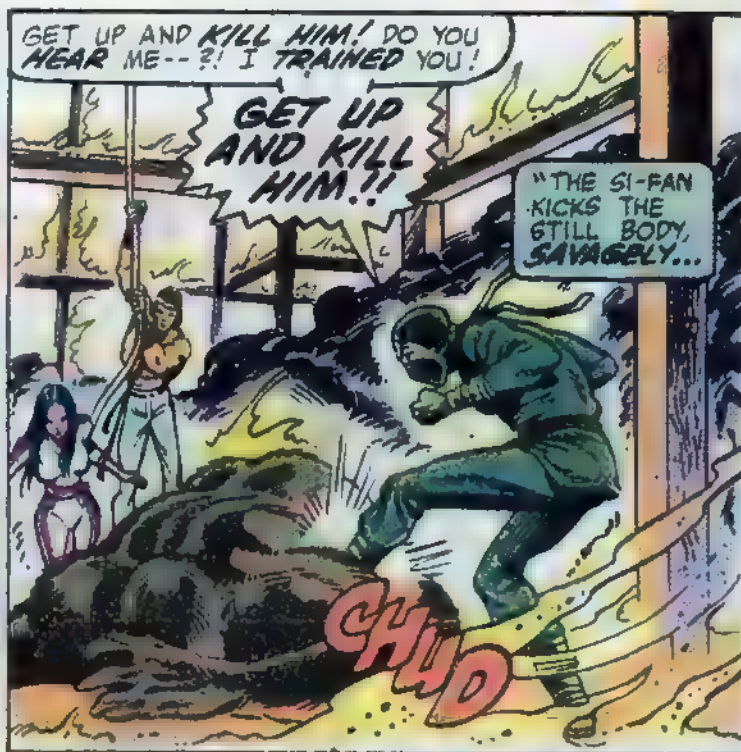
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THE MIGHTY MARVEL WIN-YOURSELF SOME-BIG-BUCKS CONTEST!

Like many other companies, we've been forced by rising costs and economic pressures to charge more for our comics. It would be easy to play innocent, and point an accusing finger at all the people who are charging us more for paper, printing, supplies and even the electricity for the old forty-watt fluorescent that burns dimly over our drawing boards late into the bleary-eyed hours of the night. We *could* blame them, but we won't. They're caught in the same one-way cost spiral as us. What we will do is something most folks aren't doing these days — *apologize*. Some folks think that inflation means you never have to say you're sorry. But *we're* sorry, and we're going to do our best to make it up to you. In just a month or two, we'll be adding extra

pages, special features and more sheer excitement than you can wiggle a web at. And while we're waiting, gearing up for all those extra goodies, we've created a great new contest for you, with some dandy, dazzling, dynamite prizes (see below)! It's a way to give you, our friends, a little something back for your patience and loyalty, and (we hope) it'll be fun to boot! Naturally, everyone can't win, but just for kicks, starting in September, we're going to print the name and address of every single entrant! So go to it, gang! In the immortal words of Irving Forbush, "He who entereth not, ain't likely to winneth!"

Shooter

Jim Shooter
Editor-in-Chief

OFFICIAL RULES

1. We're actually running **three** contests, one for readers 10 years old and under, one for readers 11 to 14 years old, and one for readers 15 years old and older. To enter, find the question for your age group, below, and on any plain piece of paper, type or legibly print your answer. Mail your entry to the address listed under the question for your age group. Be sure to write your name, address, city, state and zip code on your entry.
2. You can enter as often as you like, but each entry must be accompanied by a Marvel Comics proof-of-purchase stamp which can be found elsewhere on this page. All entries must be received by August 15, 1980 to be eligible.
3. All answers entered must be the work of the entrant himself (no fair getting help from your Philosophy Prof). Any resident of the United States can enter, except employees of the Marvel Comics Group and their immediate families, employees of affiliated companies and their immediate families, and employees of Marden-Kane, Inc., and their immediate families.
4. Entries will be judged according to originality, aptness of thought, sincerity, and neatness. Winners will be selected by Marden-Kane, Inc., an independent judging firm. Their decisions are final. All prizes will be awarded, and winners will be notified by mail. Taxes are the sole responsibility of the prize winners. No prize substitutions permitted.
5. All entries become the sole property of the Marvel Comics Group.
6. Contest void where prohibited or restricted by law. All Federal, State, and local laws and regulations apply.



THE QUESTIONS

- Q1** Ages 10 and under — "WHO IS YOUR FAVORITE MARVEL SUPER HERO, AND WHY?"
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- Q2** Ages 11 to 14 — "WHO IS YOUR LEAST FAVORITE MARVEL CHARACTER, AND WHAT CAN WE DO TO IMPROVE HIM OR HER?" Answer in 25 words or less and mail your entry to:
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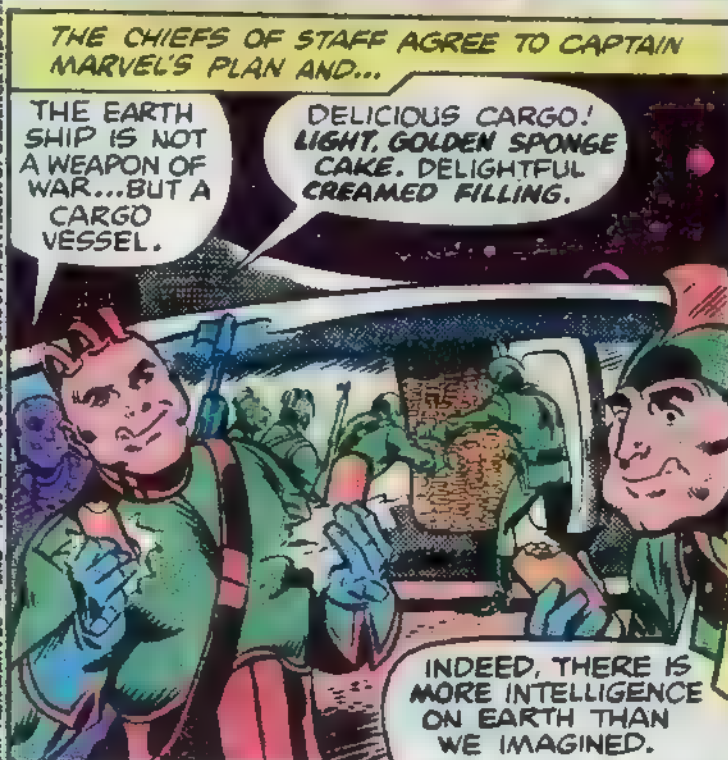
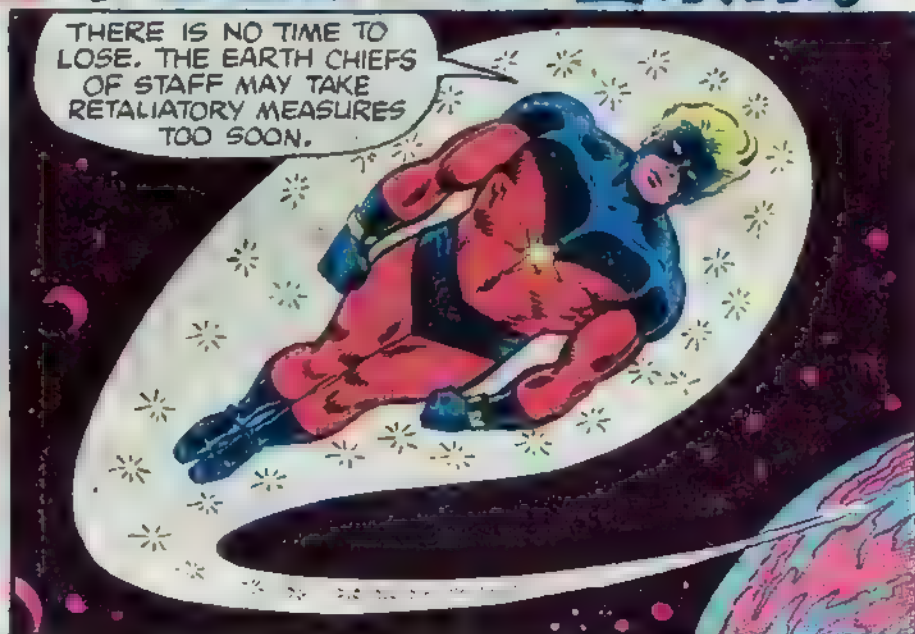
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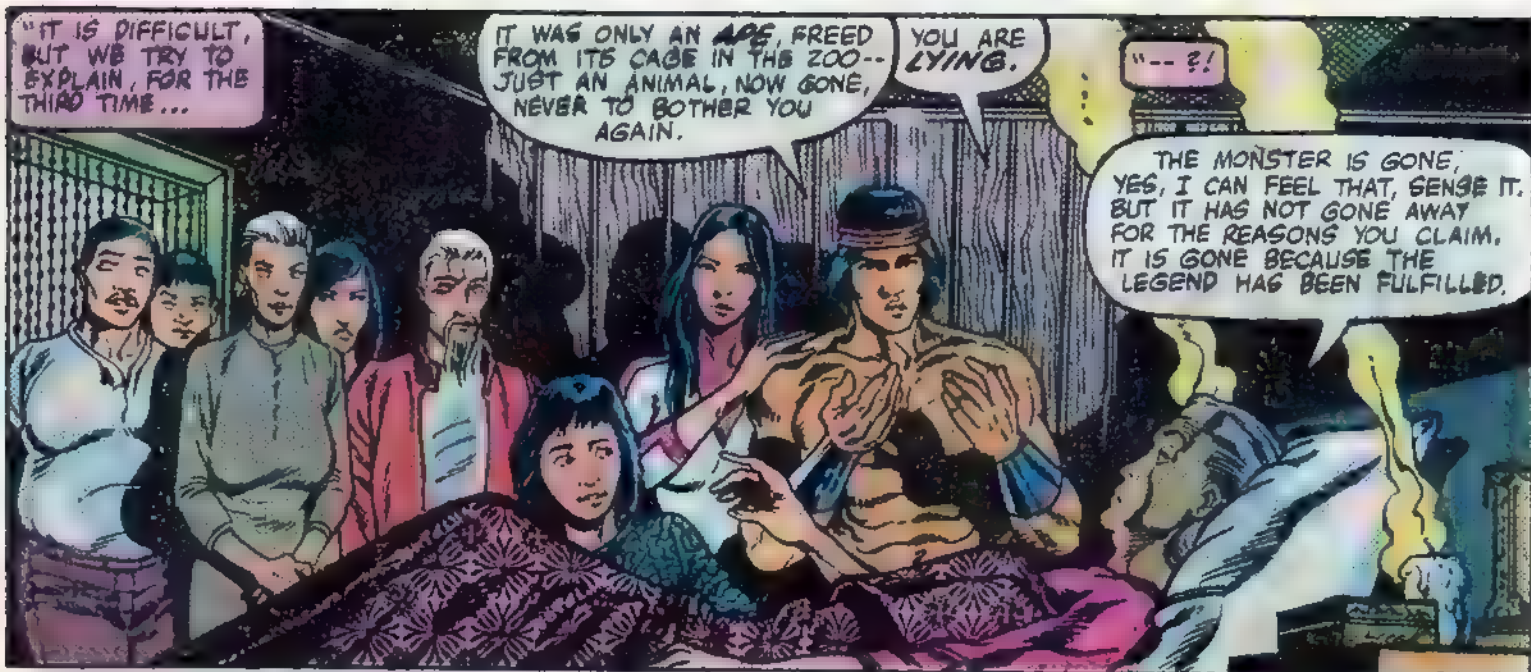
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IT WAS ONLY AN APE, FREED FROM ITS CAGE IN THE ZOO-- JUST AN ANIMAL, NOW GONE, NEVER TO BOTHER YOU AGAIN.

YOU ARE LYING.

"-- ?!"

THE MONSTER IS GONE, YES, I CAN FEEL THAT, SENSE IT. BUT IT HAS NOT GONE AWAY FOR THE REASONS YOU CLAIM. IT IS GONE BECAUSE THE LEGEND HAS BEEN FULFILLED.



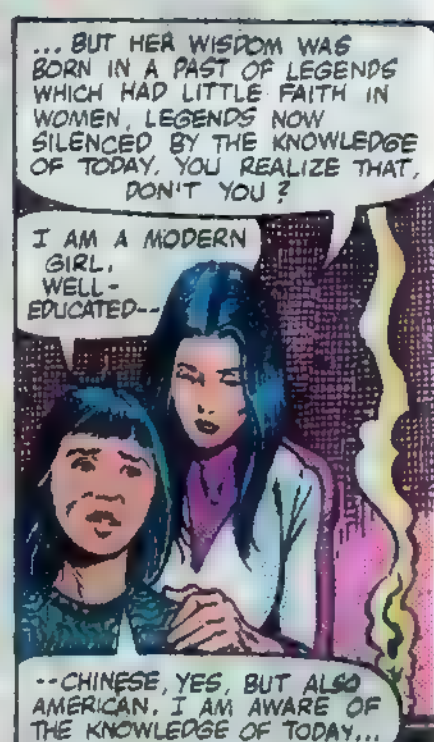
A WARRIOR FROM FARAWAY HAS COME IN ANSWER TO THE CALL OF A YOUNG MAIDEN. THE WARRIOR VENTURED DEEP INTO THE EARTH, INTO THE MONSTER'S VERY LAIR, AND IT WAS FINALLY SLAIN FOR ALL TIME, FALLING FROM THE MOUNTAINTOP IN FLAMES...



... AND THE WARRIOR BASKED IN THE GRATITUDE OF THOSE WHOM HE HAD DELIVERED FROM THE SHADOW OF EVIL.

A PRETTY LEGEND, AND ACCURATE AS A PARABLE AS FAR AS IT GOES. TOO BAD IT HAS NO ROOM FOR MY CONTRIBUTION.

YOUR GRANDMOTHER IS WISE WITH AGE, ANGELA...



... BUT HER WISDOM WAS BORN IN A PAST OF LEGENDS WHICH HAD LITTLE FAITH IN WOMEN. LEGENDS NOW SILENCED BY THE KNOWLEDGE OF TODAY, YOU REALIZE THAT, DON'T YOU?

I AM A MODERN GIRL. WELL-EDUCATED--

--CHINESE, YES, BUT ALSO AMERICAN. I AM AWARE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF TODAY...



... BUT IN THIS CASE, I STAND WITH GRANDMA. THE PAST KNOWS BEST.

"WHAT--?!"

DON'T FIGHT IT, GHANG. SHE MAY BE RIGHT.



"SHADOW PLAY."

HA HA HA HA

MY HERO.

"AND SO, THE PAST HAS REACHED INTO THE FUTURE... AND WE HAVE ALL BEEN TOUCHED BY THE CROSSING OF SHADOWS. GOOD."

NEXT: MIDNIGHT WIND

MISSIVES TO THE MASTER!

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575 Madison Avenue
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JIM SALICRUP
EDITOR
BOB BUDANSKY
ASSISTANT EDITOR

THE FINAL SECRET OF TRIGGERS, KARMIC AND COSMIC

Dear Doug Moench,

I just picked up for the first time in about eight months an issue of MASTER OF KUNG FU and it was incredible! I'm talking about #83 — "The Phoenix and the Snake." I'm now convinced that Fu Manchu is nothing less than the leader of that fabled secret society, the Illuminati. Even the title gives some evidence of this; the Phoenix was the secret name of Aleister Crowley, an infamous Illuminati conspirator, when he was in the Ordo Templi Orientis. Also, the ancient Egyptians placed Sirius, the dog-star which is associated with the Illuminati, in the constellation of Phoenix. On page 27 Fu Manchu says, "Orientis Illuminati." This is the crowning piece of evidence, coupled with Fah Lo Suee's statement, "You are the one true light of Illumination." This, however, is only the tip of the iceberg. 23 is a number with mystical meaning among the Illuminati, as is 666. At the beginning of the story Fu refers to his followers (among them the Hashishen) as members of the 23rd sect and, moreover, as members of the Order of the Golden Dawn — which is the name of a group of Bay Area Illuminati-oriented witches. The Hashishen were the first Illuminati in 1090 A.D. Their leader was Hassan I Sabbah, just in case his name comes up. The symbol of the Illuminati was the Eye in the Triangle or Pyramid, which appears numerous times in this story. First: Fu Manchu walks through a triangular portal with an eye painted atop it. Second; he forms the eye in the pyramid with his fingers and right eye while bathing in the elixir. Third; he envisions the mystic numbers 23, 5, and 666 (in a pyramid, no less) and a golden apple along with the eye in the pyramid on page 11. Last, he says, "I smoked... the bitter taste of sweet dreams." I believe he was smoking hashish, since he immediately experiences seemingly drug-induced visions. If this is so, then even more evidence has been given that Fu Manchu is an Illuminati, since many Illuminati sects (including the Hashishen, of course) used hashish in their rituals. Congratulations on a great job. Keep it up.

Michael Perkins
(no address given)

Holy Illuminati!!!

*Fu Manchu as the Golden Dawn?! What would Aleister Crowley think?!

*Thugees? Hashishen? Templars? Holy Kaballah! Great Hassan I Sabbah! Great eye in the triangle! GREAT GOD 23!!

*My mind boggles, my liver quakes, my brain squirms... because I know... THE ILLUMINATI ARE AT WORK AGAIN!!

*Will the forces of ORDER, the Pentagon-people, the ULTIMATE CONSPIRACY TRIUMPH?!

*NO.

(ORDER = CHAOS...) HAIL ERIS!!

Rev. Gonzo, Cult of Eris
Church of the Lopsided Trapezoid
1102 Nevada St.
Bellingham, Wash. 98225

Dear Doug, Mike, and Gene:

Actually, this letter is addressed primarily to Doug Moench, but the rest of you are doing a fabulous job, as I've pointed out before.

Plotwise: So Fu Manchu is back. I expected it. I was waiting for it. But I didn't expect *this*! Doug, this isn't just Fu Manchu; this is Aleister Crowley, the Illuminati, and Fu all squashed together!

Before I go on, I recommend that the audience at home go out and buy all three volumes of ILLUMINATUS! by Robert Anton Wilson and Robert Shea, right away. Apparently, Mr. Moench has read them.

For instance, the montage at the bottom of page 11: To the uninitiated it is nonsense. The numbers 5 and 23 have various arcane significances — especially to that secret organization plotting to control the world, otherwise known as the Illuminati. The golden apple is the symbol of those

forces opposing the Illuminati. 666 refers to the "number of the beast" — the kabbalistic name that Aleister Crowley took for himself. The "peace symbol" is the shape of the crosses on which earlier prophets were crucified upside-down. The swastika and calf's skull are inexplicable to the uninitiated but figure prominently in Illuminati lore. The eye in the pyramid is as old as the Illuminati themselves and appears, coincidentally (?), on the back of the dollar bill. It also appears five times in issue #83.

Again, on page 8, Fu Manchu affirms his association with the Illuminati, if only unconsciously. The Si-Fan, Phansigars, and Thugees have always been associated with Fu, but the Hashishen and the Knights Templar are new. However, the Hashishen (from whose name we get the word "assassin") and the Knights Templar (who may or may not still be in existence) are groups clearly associated with the Illuminati.

Lastly, Fu calls his latest organization The Order of the Golden Dawn — in ignorance, I hope, of Crowley, who started his own mystical group with a similar name. Incidentally, the snake on Fu's talisman should have its tail in its mouth. Excelsior!

Phil Jones
2881 Gervais Street
Columbia, S.C. 29204

Dear Doug,

Concerning MOKF #83: Specifically, the recurrent eye-in-the-pyramid, the references to illumination, enlightenment, the left-hand path, the numbers 5 and 23, the golden apple and the Cross of Lilith Veikor — are we beset with one of those unavoidable mindleaks or has someone been reading the *Illuminatus!* trilogy? Hail Eris!

Dan Perkins
4432 Burge
Iowa City, IA 52242

Both, Dan, and — wait a minute... Doug just noticed a little synchronicity of our own right here on the letters page. Check out the last name of our first and last correspondents; the snake, indeed, has its tail in its mouth...

But to clear the boards right up front: Yes, Doug has read *Illuminatus!*, *Cosmic Trigger*, and *Schrodinger's Cat* (as well as several other closely related but unmentionable books), and heartily recommends them all. Indeed, Doug maintains a sporadic correspondence with Robert Anton Wilson himself — who, from time to time, has been known to peruse a comicbook or two in idle moments. See how serendipitous synchronicity can sometimes be?

Now, getting serious, on to the important facts: While Doug cannot claim to have written "The Phoenix and the Snake" deep in the inner sanctum sanctorum of the Chapel Perilous, he has visited the Chapel in strange times past, and with this in mind he wrote the story at a time when Sirius was rising, but only after thoroughly discussing the plot with Max. (Max is Doug's blind but exceedingly enlightened pooch.) And perhaps it should also be mentioned that a small statue of the Egyptian god Horus rests on the sill of the cathedral window overlooking Doug's desk. Furthermore, it was the 5th day of the week as well as the 23rd of the month, and halfway through the writing when an Aleister Crowley book toppled against an Aldous Huxley tome, whereupon both fell from shelf to floor causing Doug to look up and discover that his clock had stopped at 5 minutes to five. Finally, "The Phoenix and the Snake" was the 666th story Doug has written.

In closing, one last discordant coincidence (or synchronicity, if you will): Long before Doug had ever heard of the Illuminati, long before *Illuminatus!* or *Cosmic Trigger* had been written — nine years ago, to be exact — Doug's first prose story ever published (in KNIGHT magazine) was entitled "23 on the 23rd" — being an only slightly fictionalized autobiographical account of weird occurrences on Doug's 23rd Birthday: February 23, 1971. So just remember, enlightened ones, in the immortal words of Malaclypse the Younger: "Tis an ill wind that blows no minds."

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